

"Bug of the Month"

Recently local news stories have brought attention to the Asian gypsy moth (*Lymantria dispar*), a serious pest that periodically invades the Pacific Northwest. The Asian gypsy moth was first identified in North America late in 1991 near the Port of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada and in Washington and Oregon shortly after that. The moths were mostly from ships infested with eggs masses from ports in eastern Russia that later hatched while the ships were in port in the Northwest.

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? The Asian gypsy moth is very similar to the European gypsy moth which has caused extensive damage to northeastern forests. The adult moth has a wingspan of about 1 ½ to 3 ½ inches. The female is white with brown markings. The male is slightly smaller and is tan with brown markings. The egg masses may be found on trees, stones, walls, logs, lawn furniture, and other outdoor objects. Each egg mass can contain more than 1,000 eggs. The mass is covered with buff or yellow fuzz from the abdomen of the female. The caterpillars emerge in June or July depending on weather. Eggs are generally laid between July and September and remain dormant during the winter.

WHAT DO THEY DO? The Asian gypsy moth has a greater potential to cause serious defoliation than the European gypsy moth. Unlike the European variety, the female Asian gypsy moth can fly, allowing for greater spread of an infestation. Also, the Asian gypsy moth eats evergreen trees as well as deciduous trees. Trees defoliated repeatedly either die or become so weak that they are susceptible to disease and other pests. This would result in loss in wildlife habitat and significant degradation of water quality as a result of increased temperature, siltation, and excessive amounts of caterpillar droppings being deposited in the water. The Asian gypsy moth is easily transported to a new site via 1) egg masses that have hitched a ride on ships, cars, or other objects, or 2) from newly hatched larvae which climb objects, then produce a silk thread that helps lift them into the wind and on to other areas.



MANAGEMENT. USDA/APHIS is the lead federal agency dealing with the Asian gypsy moth. APHIS will inspect foreign vessels and cargo for gypsy moth egg masses. If found, the most common eradication method used against the Asian gypsy moth is treatment with the naturally occurring bacteria, *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (BTK). BTK only affects caterpillars and must be ingested by the caterpillar in order to be effective. Individuals can take the following actions to assist in the detection and management of this pest:

- Report any findings of egg masses on trees, lawn furniture, fences, walls, or elsewhere on private property to Federal or State agriculture officials.
- Cooperate with any restrictions that might be imposed locally because of a gypsy moth infestation.
- Allow authorized agriculture workers access to property to place and inspect traps for monitoring the gypsy moth.

MORE QUESTIONS? Please do not hesitate to give your "Bug Docs" a call at comm.: (360) 315-4450, DSN: 322-4450 or you can e-mail us at MEI@ndvecc.navy.mil.